

THIRTY-FOURTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MINISTRY-AT-LARGE,

IN LOWELL, MASS.,

TO THE

LOWELL MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

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Read Feb. 23, 1879.

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LOWELL, MASS.:  
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1879.



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## REPORT.

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*To the Directors of the Lowell Missionary Society:*

GENTLEMEN,— We received and recorded during the last year 3,062 applications for charitable assistance, mainly for the necessaries of life. Of these, 890 were refused, and 2,172 were granted. They stand, in respect to nationality and parentage, as follows :

American . . . . .	1,085
Irish . . . . .	866
English . . . . .	648
Scotch . . . . .	278
French . . . . .	105
Other nationalities . . . . .	80

Being 1,977 foreign and 1,085 American.

In responding to these calls, we expended \$2,757.02, as following: \$841 from the charity fund of the Lowell Missionary Society, \$1,500 from the income of the Nesmith Fund, \$346.02 special funds, and \$70 from the Dalton Fund. The interest of the Tyler Fund for six months has been placed in my hands, the disbursement of which commences with the new year.

Besides our cash expenditures, we have distributed 1,493 articles of wearing apparel, 222 yards of cotton flannel and other cloth, recommended fourteen patients



house, as an inmate; and the sensation it produced on my mind, and the possible contingency it suggested, were anything but agreeable. Neglect of this sort is not creditable to our Christianity, nor to our humanity.

But these are exceptional cases, and are not very numerous. Apart from cases like these, outside help is not wise except it be limited both as to time and amount, whether it be administered by institutions of charity or by the state.

It is argued in favor of this method of affording relief, that it is often more humane, and at the same time more economical; that when a man, for instance, is able in part to support his family, but not wholly, it is cheaper and kinder to supplement his earnings with aid from the town, than to require him to break up and "pack off" to the poorhouse. This looks very reasonable, and undoubtedly would be true if his were the only case. But unfortunately it serves as a precedent for a thousand others to hasten to follow. If there were no relief at all to be obtained outside the almshouse, except of the most temporary character, we should find that not more than one in ten would apply for it, and perhaps not one in twenty. There is an intense feeling against accepting the provisions of the almshouse. Those who usually apply for relief from the city are constitutionally opposed to the restraints and system of a public institution; the "prohibitory law" which is here enforced is exceedingly unpopular and distasteful to this class; and they will make many a shift to get on without help, if this is the only way in which it can be obtained.

Liberal out-door relief discourages providence and thrift, and encourages prodigality and vice. A and B work side by side. A saves his money and buys a little



home. B spends his as he goes along, knowing that he will be cared for in case of need. By and by age comes upon them, and they are unable longer to work. B applies to the city, and is supported in his "own hired house"; and A is called upon to pay his share of the taxes required for his support. What encouragement, then, is there for him to save? He is but little better off than the other, after all.

Then, again, if the state consents to make up a deficiency in wages, there is an additional temptation to lower the wages,—not, indeed, with the intention of having it made up by the city or town, but simply because it *can* be done. It is a principle in business, the world over, to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the highest. The cost of living will in the main govern the price of labor, and whatever tends to lower the one, will reduce the other. It is, therefore, unwise, and impolitic to give out-door relief, except in very limited amounts, as its effect is to discourage forethought and prudence, to depress the labor market, and leave the poor in no better condition than before. "It should be our aim," says Professor Fawcett, after showing by statistics the evil effects of this system in England; "it should be our aim by gradual steps to discourage and ultimately abolish out-door relief." I therefore commend the purpose of our city government to restrict this form of pauper aid to the narrowest possible limits, and the order of the Trustees of the Nesmith Fund, limiting this charity to three successive years of help. Exceptional cases can be supplied from funds raised from time to time for their benefit.

We have been asked whether there really is much suffering now in Lowell, and if so, what are the causes.

To the first we are obliged to answer, there is still



much suffering. There are those who go to bed hungry, and get up hungry, and go to their work hungry, when they have any work to go to. And such instances are by no means infrequent. A young lady, an American, well educated and well bred, came to our office about four o'clock in the afternoon for aid. To ascertain her present need (for we knew the family to be worthy), the question was asked, "What have you in the house to eat?" "Nothing," was the answer. "What had you for dinner?" "Nothing." "Nothing?" "Nothing!" "What for your breakfast?" "Nothing!" "What for your supper last night?" "Nothing." "What for your dinner yesterday?" "Nothing!" was the answer again. And the breakfast before it was almost nothing. "And did you work all this time," we inquired, "without food?" She said she had, but was obliged at last to give up. She had been thirty-three hours without food. If overseers knew how faint and hungry their girls sometimes stand at their frames, or bend over their looms, their hearts would be moved to pity, and their charity would cover a multitude of faults in their work. This girl could not afford to leave her work, for her two hands, light and slender as they were, earned the bread for four in the family. A young married woman writes to her mother in the country, "I am out of work entirely, and I shall starve, for aught I know. But it is hard to see my child crying for bread, and no way to give her a bit. I am 'most crazy. We have had not much but bread to eat for three weeks." The day before Christmas I called on a very respectable family, to inquire into their circumstances, as I feared they might be in need. "How do you get along?" I said. "Well," said the lady, in that rich brogue peculiar to the Scotch, "we get along." "How much does your husband earn?" I



asked. "Ninety cents a day," was the reply. "Can you manage to live on that?" I said, there being five in the family. "We *do* manage it," she continued, "and thank God, we are not in debt. My husband, of course, must have something to eat, as he labors, and the rest of us get along as we can." I left a five-dollar bill as a Christmas present, and went my way, knowing that it was safe in such hands. Ninety cents a day in a family of five is just eighteen cents apiece, including food, fuel, lights, rent, and clothing. Did these poor people ever retire hungry? Who can doubt it?

These are but a few of the many cases of want I could mention; but I forbear. Not all, however, are equally deserving of sympathy, because not equally provident and good. The number of applications received the last year exceeds a very little that of the preceding year, and about four thousand have been in receipt of help from the city during the year, being about one in thirteen of the population.

It is evident, therefore, that there is still want, actual want, in the city.

Then, why is it? We are told from time to time that the business outlook is improving. Careful statistics show that in round numbers there were 28,000 unemployed laborers in Massachusetts last June, and in November there were only 23,000, a difference in favor of labor of 5,000. There never was more cloth manufactured in Lowell than to-day. There never were more hands employed. Many new mills have been erected during the last ten years, and they are all running. And though wages are low, too low, they are yet higher than they were in 1860, while the cost of living has not advanced in proportion. Why, then, is it that there is yet so much real want?



There are many reasons, to three of which I will briefly allude.

First. The influx of the poor from other towns and cities, has kept up the demand for aid in our particular city. They have heard that business was good here, and so they have come,

“poor and needy,  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore.”

The last year has brought us many such, and as they have no legal settlement here, they are obliged to rely on private charity till they can find work, which is often difficult.

In a more general sense, this is true of all our larger towns and cities. During the *mirage* of prosperity, when it was thought everybody was growing rich, the young men left the farms on which their fathers toiled, and flowed into the cities, as the waters are drained from the hills into their natural basins, till they were full and overflowing. Within a half-mile of the old farm on which it is my habit to spend my vacations in New Hampshire, I counted five cellars from which the houses had been removed, and the farms turned out to pasture, or left to grow up with bushes; and the town, a few years ago buoyant with life and the merry laughter of many young people, is scarcely able now to get up a “spelling bee,” or to sustain the poor remnant of a Sunday school. The young people have all gone into the larger towns and cities, never to return again to the hills they left. Not a few are filling places of honor and trust. The census of 1870 shows that, notwithstanding the growing cities of Manchester, Nashua, Dover, and others, the population of New Hampshire fell off 7,773 during the ten years preceding,

It is this drain upon the country, and the filling up



of the cities, together with improved machinery, that has overstocked the labor market, and given us 20,000 unemployed laborers in Massachusetts to-day.

Second. Ten years of unusual prosperity — apparent or real — developed new tastes and created new desires, which now it is hard to restrain; and I am not sure that in some particulars they ought to be restrained. They belong to a higher civilization, and it is not desirable to go backward. The war, for example, stimulated a universal desire for the daily news, and now that the war is over, the laborer must have his daily paper, where before he was content with a weekly, or none at all. The immense sale of pianos and cabinet organs shows how extensively these instruments are finding their way into the homes even of the common laborer, and indicates the increasing demand for this refining luxury. If the cultivation of music is not desirable, we should not teach it in our schools. Nevertheless, the gratification of this taste costs something. We reckoned only on the salary of the teacher, and we have sought economy by reducing that. But the salary is nothing. It is the gratification of the taste which the teacher creates, that costs. There is also a desire for better household furniture, more books, and a greater ornamentation of the home and the person. Men and women do not dress now as they once did. We can all remember when a print dress was good enough for ordinary wear, and a twenty-five-cent delaine was considered almost an extravagance. Now the same class of persons can not get along well with a "Sunday suit" which costs less than a dollar a yard, "with hat and gloves to match." These things are not necessary; yet if we are to sell our goods, it is not policy to discourage their purchase and consumption. But all this



higher style of life costs something. We can not go on educating the people and improving society without paying the price. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The price is, of course, higher wages.

Third. But all this desire for increased expenditure has not been in the direction of a higher civilization, and the evil is even more difficult to curb than the good; notably, the use of intoxicating beverages. In fact, all the other causes of want combined are but a tithe compared with this. "My husband," said a woman to me on asking aid, "used to earn four dollars a day." I asked her if he saved anything at that time. "No," she said, "it went for drink." This man attributed his misfortune to the maladministration of the government, and was an advocate of "reform." One man, now temperate, and living on eight dollars a week, told me that in those good old days of high wages his liquor bill was from forty to fifty dollars a month. A leaf from a grocer's pass-book, picked up in the street and published a short time since in one of our daily papers, will illustrate this evil. The account runs thus:

1877.	<i>Brought up</i>	.	.	.	.	\$25 10
Aug. 27,	Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
	1 lb. butter	.	.	.	.	30
	Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
Aug. 28,	Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
	4 doz. crackers.	.	.	.	.	24
	1½ butter	.	.	.	.	34
	Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
	Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
						<hr/>
						27 23
	By cash	.	.	.	.	17 00
						<hr/>
	<i>Amount carried forward</i>	.	.	.	.	\$10 23



<i>Amount brought forward</i>	.	.	.	.	\$10 23
Aug. 29, Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
1 lb. butter	.	.	.	.	30
Aug. 30, Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
1 lb. butter	.	.	.	.	30
Aug. 31, 3 lbs. sugar	.	.	.	.	38
Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. tea	.	.	.	.	30
$1\frac{1}{8}$ butter	.	.	.	.	32
Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
Sept. 1, Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
$1\frac{1}{8}$ butter	.	.	.	.	34
3 lbs. sugar	.	.	.	.	36
Pint rum	.	.	.	.	25
Quart whiskey	.	.	.	.	50
1 doz. crackers	.	.	.	.	06
Sept. 3, 1 lb. butter	.	.	.	.	30
1 pint rum	.	.	.	.	25
Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
Pint whiskey	.	.	.	.	25
					<hr/>
					\$16 14

With these facts before us, it is not difficult to say why there is so much distress, for what is drank is lost. If one man steals from another, the wealth purloined is not *destroyed*. It has only changed hands. Society is not impoverished by it. But every dollar that is spent for drink leaves the community just one dollar poorer. It has been estimated that the entire valuation of the United States is thus consumed once in about every twenty-three years. Is it any wonder, therefore, that we have a financial crisis about every twenty years,\* and complain of "hard times"? A careful observer writes of the poor of England, "It is not circumstances that

\* Our memory goes back to the crisis of 1837, and again 1857, and latterly 1873.



reduce the British workman to pauperism; it is beer and gin."

We have grown tired of this subject, I know. Like the poor struggling fly in the spider's web, disheartened and discouraged, we are ready to give it up from sheer exhaustion. But again and again the subject forces itself upon us, and we must consider it, and if possible master it. It results in suffering and destitution, and this again in discontent and dissatisfaction, which rises to jealousies and sometimes even bitterness of feeling toward the more prosperous and wealthy in the community, affording just the soil for the introduction of German Socialism or French Communism.

In fact, socialism is already introduced, and like the virus of a consuming fever, it is spreading to every department of labor where the conditions are favorable for its reception. It has its origin under monarchies, where it may not be without some justification, and it thrives under oppression; but American liberty is so broad and complete, that it could not exist here at all, except for the poverty experienced among the laboring classes; which poverty, I must insist, is too often owing to improvidence and intemperance. It has this, and this only, for an excuse to live in this country. The poor know that they are poor. The suffering are conscious of their distress. The employed feel that they are kept at the bottom of the ladder. They feel their helplessness, and, like a drowning man, will seize upon anything that promises relief, no matter how frail or deceptive it is; and in their frenzy they are just as liable to upset the lifeboat sent to their rescue, as they are to avail themselves of it to escape from their situation.

Men in trouble are wont, always, to seek the cause of their misfortunes outside of themselves. They seldom



suspect that the difficulty may lie nearer home; that it may be in their want of forethought, prudence, abstinence from drink, a little self-denial at the right time, careful industry, and faithfulness in the discharge of duty, and the like. They see others more prosperous than themselves, and they suspect that some unfair advantage has been taken of them. Their want of success, in their judgment, is never owing to any lack on their part, but to some wrong on the part of others. The ignorant multitudes that have filled our factories, our mines, railroads, and other great industries so largely, to the exclusion of the more intelligent laborer once employed, are swift to attribute their depressed condition to the oppression of capital, or of the state, or both, no matter what other causes may have contributed to the result; and they hope by overturning these to obtain relief. A letter has recently fallen into my hands, which after recounting the extreme destitution of the writer, continues: "Everybody is complaining of the hard times. People all think that there will be a rebellion before long." I have taken the pains to look into this case, and I find the husband of the writer had quarrelled with his overseer, left his work, and is too "independent" to ask for it again. Meantime his family is reduced to absolute want, and "rebellion" is talked of.

Wise legislation undoubtedly advances the material interests of a nation, and bad legislation retards its prosperity. Capital is power, and where power exists, it is liable to be exercised, and sometimes unduly. But I think we expect too much from legislation. There are laws older than the state, laws of growth and exchange, which can not be broken nor set aside by enactments,—the eternal and immutable law of sowing



and reaping, of cause and effect. The state can not change these to suit any class, high or low. When times are bad, party leaders take advantage of the circumstance to regain, or to retain, political power, by promises of better times if their candidates are elected; and not only the most ignorant voters are made to believe it, but even some very intelligent people. I remember when a certain candidate for the Presidency was before the people asking their suffrages, though he had been a lifelong temperance advocate, there were people in the shops of Lowell who believed that if he were elected, beer could be had for three cents a pint; and more recently a well-meaning mechanic came to me with a most deplorable countenance the next day after a State election, bewailing the result of the contest, as from the date of the inauguration of the new governor a certain United States currency would become worthless! Such, and many other like preposterous results, are honestly believed by many to follow the election of a governor of a State or the President of the United States.

Hence the purpose of Socialism to seize the government, confiscate all private property, do away with the wholesome law of competition, and operate all our industries by the state for the equal benefit of all; and thus, by one bold *coup d'état*, wipe out all inequality, and all poverty and distress,—a theory which sounds well, but which in practice has always resulted in the worst forms of tyranny and oppression, and the extremest inequalities of social conditions.

This element is not greatly to be feared in this country, as it rests on but a slender excuse for existence here, and it has always lacked the cohesiveness essential to ultimate success.



Nevertheless, it is capable, under its various forms of existence, of doing a vast deal of mischief; as we have already found, in the extensive strikes and insurrections at the mines and the great railways of the country, by which commerce between different sections was so paralyzed that starvation in some quarters became seriously threatened; and which two or three States were powerless to suppress without the aid of the General Government.

It is therefore not to be despised nor treated with contempt, but to be carefully watched and judiciously guarded against,—not by oppression, real or apparent, for it thrives on oppression; not by forms of law which discriminate against the poor, nor yet flatter them, for the one is scarcely more mischievous than the other,—but by removing, first of all, every vestige of real hardship or wrong from the laborer, and the maintenance of such laws as shall throw the burden of the state equally upon all who enjoy its protection, and secure freedom to all,—freedom to rise, and freedom each to enjoy the results of his own industry,—and thus remove every excuse for the “rebellion” talked of, the strikes precipitated, and the violence threatened. It will do no hurt to review our systems of employment and labor occasionally, carefully, thoughtfully, and in the spirit of justice, that its bearing if possible may be made lighter and its friction less. The great difficulty experienced in suppressing the railroad insurrections which recently occurred in Baltimore and Pittsburg, was in the fact that the strikers had so largely the sympathy of the public. This could hardly have occurred, had the railroad officials been absolutely free from all appearance of injustice toward their employés. The very fact that so many merchants and men of respectability were found to sympathize with these strikers, until they resorted to vio-



lence, suggests the need of occasional revisions of our systems of labor, that we may detect any abuses which may creep into them.

To this end, a Congress of Labor, held annually, not by the state, but by employers themselves, at which all these questions should be discussed and weighed from a practical standpoint, might lead to profitable results. It is evident to my mind that the solution of this problem is to be worked out mainly by the employer.

What we want is, to enlist the rank and file of the people on the side of capital and good order, and prove to them beyond a doubt that the former is not opposed to their interest, but is the real source of their living and comfort; and when they destroy the one, they cut off the other. And to do this, no argument will prove so effective as that which makes the laborer a capitalist himself. The introduction of ten-dollar government bonds among the people would be the very best possible cure for the anti-bond mania, and the dangerous heresy of repudiation; and the possession of a little property by the laborer in his own right is the surest antidote to communism.

When a man owns his little home, he becomes a *fix-ture*, a citizen, interested in the welfare of the town; and he is not likely to become anxious for the division of property which would require him to share his careful savings with his less prudent and more indolent neighbor. An operative who owns his house and has another to let, tells me he obtained it by putting aside a five-dollar bill. He found when he had done this, he wanted to put another with it, and still another and another, and now he represents both labor and capital. Such men make stable and reliable citizens.

It should therefore be the policy, not only of the state,



but of the employer, to encourage the laborer, not only to save a few dollars, but to *invest* it in property. The savings banks are good, but they lack one most essential feature: they do not create a *fixed* population. Money may be drawn from the bank at any time, and carried away, but money invested in a home is not so easily exchanged for cash; and thus it gives a fixedness to the population, from which rarely come any essential difficulties. It is the "floating" classes that are to be feared; not those who settle down, and have an interest to remain where they are.

I do not forget, in offering these suggestions, the importance of Education. This is the right arm of all free institutions, and it underlies the whole question of Socialism. It is and must be our main reliance in dealing with all the evils which afflict society. But while we are busy with ignorance in our schools at home, and are seeking to close the Golden Gate against it on the West, the doors are left wide open to the ignorance of all Europe on the East, and adult ignorance is not reached by our public schools. We must therefore contend with it by other methods, until the leaven of education has so permeated the masses as to render it harmless. If, however, the labor reformer would address himself to the task of disseminating knowledge, of educating the laborer, of elevating him morally and intellectually, instead of dwelling on the "rights" of labor, he would attain his end in half the time. To reform labor we must reform the laborer. The latter will necessitate the former.

Meantime, the poor must be cared for and the helpless aided, as best we can.

Respectfully submitted,

H. C. DUGANNE.



Dr. D. B. BARTLETT, Treasurer, in account with the Lowell Missionary Association, January 9, 1879. Cr.

Dr. D. B. BARTLETT, Treasurer, in account with the Lowell Missionary Association, January 9, 1879.

DR.		CHARITY FUND.		CR.	
Jan. 9, 1879.	To payments as follows :		Jan. 4, 1878.	By balance from old account	\$ 586 76
In charity,	by Nesmith Fund	\$1,500 00	Jan. 9, 1879.	By amounts received as follows :	
"	" vote of directors	841 00		From Nesmith Fund	\$ 1,500 00
"	" special collections	346 02		" special collections	346 02
"	" Dalton Fund	70 00		" donations to Rev. Mr. Duganne.	163 00
				" collection in Unitarian church	87 25
		\$2,757 02		" Dalton Fund	70 00
				" J. C. Palfrey Fund	60 00
To balance to new account		86 01		" Holbrook Fund	30 00
					2,256 27
					\$2,843 03

D. B. BARTLETT, Treasurer.